

Monthly Updates – from the Mayor – December 2019

Since the minutes from our regular monthly Board meeting are not formally approved and posted on the Village website until the following month, it seems that our residents might be more fully informed of Village affairs by having regular updates posted on our website sooner, rather than later. To that end, it has been decided to provide our readers with some monthly updates, and if there are any concerns or a need for more information, please call (315-673-3112) or email (clerk@villageofmarcellus.com) the Village Office.

Police Chief Resignation – as a result of his recent election as Supervisor of the Town of Lysander, Village Police Chief Robert A. Wicks is retiring from the Marcellus Police Department effective December 31, 2019. A motion was made and approved to accept the resignation, with much regret, of Robert A. Wicks as Village Police Chief, effective December 31, 2019, to thank him for his very dedicated service of ten years (2009-2019) to the Village of Marcellus and its residents and to extend the Board's best wishes and continued success as he begins a new career in public service. In the interim, while the Board conducts a search for a new Chief, Robert Pitman, presently the Chief of Police in Homer, NY, has agreed to oversee police operations in the Village of Marcellus.

Certificate of Excellence – Robert A. Wicks – a Certificate of Excellence, recognizing the service of Marcellus Police Chief, Robert A. Wicks for his ten years of dedicated service to the residents of the Village of Marcellus, was approved.

Police Appointment and Promotion – there were two motions to be made with regard to the Marcellus Police Department:

a. Police Appointment – the Mayor appointed one new officer to the Marcellus Police Department. Officer Patrick DiCrao will serve as a Village Patrolman following his retirement and a very distinguished career with the Syracuse Police Department. This appointment will be effective on January 1, 2020 and his salary as a Marcellus Village Patrolman will be \$19.52 per hour. The Board was pleased to make this appointment and wishes Officer DiCrao continued success as a member of the Marcellus Police Department.

b. Police Promotion – a motion was made and approved to promote, at the request of Police Chief Wicks, Detective Rich Curran, presently a Police Detective in the Marcellus Police Department, to the position of Police Sergeant in the Department at a salary of \$21.26 per hour. This promotion will be effective on Wednesday, January 1, 2020.

Election Resolution – a motion was made and approved to appoint Patricia White and Mary Finn as Inspectors of Election, designating Patricia White as the Chairperson thereof, to fix the compensation for each of the Inspectors of Election and the Chairperson, at \$15.00 per hour, not to exceed \$150.00 per day, and to appoint Joanne Perry as alternate Inspector. In addition, it should be noted that there is no registration day for the Village of Marcellus, since the Village opted out of registration day by resolution on January 25, 1993, that to receive a ballot by mail, applications must be received by the Village Clerk at the Village Hall, located at 6 Slocombe Avenue, Marcellus, NY, no later than 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, March 10, 2020, that to receive an absentee ballot in person, personal applications must be received by the Village Clerk by the applicant or the applicant's agent no later than by 5:00 p.m. on Monday, March 16, 2020, and the Village Clerk must deliver the absentee ballots to the Election Inspectors by 9 p.m. on election day, that the Village Election for the Village of Marcellus shall be held on Wednesday, March 18, 2020, at the Village Hall, 6 Slocombe Avenue, Marcellus, NY,

between the hours of 12 o'clock noon through 9 o'clock p.m., local time. The offices to be filled on that day are that of Trustee (4 years) and Trustee (2 years), the latter to fill a vacancy. Is there a second? Is there any discussion? All in favor – All opposed –

Sign 12-Month OCRRA Hauler Contract - a motion was made and approved to authorize the Mayor to sign a 12-month contract, for 2020 beginning January 1, 2020 and ending December 31, 2020, with Onondaga County Resource Recovery Agency for refuse and recycling pickup within the Village of Marcellus. Last year, OCRRA's Board approved an increase of \$6 for the Municipal Solid Waste rate, and increased the C & D disposal rate to \$52.00/ton fixed for calendar year 2020 and all haulers serving the Onondaga County community are required to sign the same contract.

Lake Country Veterinary Contract – a motion was made and approved to authorize the Mayor to sign an agreement between the Village of Marcellus and Lake Country Veterinary Clinic whereby Lake Country veterinary will establish a shelter to house dogs picked up by the Village Dog Control Officer. The cost for boarding and vaccinations of dogs will be billed to the owner of the dog. For stray dogs eligible for adoption, boarding and medicine will be billed to the person adopting the animal.

Marcellus Veterinary Hospital Contract – a motion was made and approved to authorize the Mayor to sign an agreement between the Village of Marcellus and Marcellus Veterinary Hospital whereby Marcellus Veterinary Hospital will establish a shelter to house dogs picked up by the Village Dog Control Officer, said contract to include the hospital fees for housing, vaccinating, and caring for stray dogs.

Village Improvement Plan – a motion was made and approved to continue the Village Infrastructure Program, an agreement whereby the County provides financial assistance to the Village for the construction and maintenance of public improvements, and to complete the Application for Financial Assistance provided to the Village by the County of Onondaga and to submit such application by January 1, 2020.

Authorize Mayor to Sign Health Insurance Contracts – a motion was made and approved to note in the minutes that since all the employees elected to renew on the existing Gold 5 plan, there is no need for the Mayor to sign the Health Insurance Contracts with Excellus Blue Cross/Blue Shield, which contracts provide health and dental benefits for Village employees. The Mayor has already signed a copy of the one document that Excellus does require to be updated annually. The Village will cover 90% of the cost of an employee's benefits, while the employee will pay 10% of said cost. The new contracts and coverage, copies of which are available for inspection in the Village Office, have resulted in an increase of about 3% for health coverage and 0% for dental coverage, beginning in January 2020. Coverage is similar to last year, with little increase in premiums, but some increase in deductibles.

Employee Health Insurance Opt-out – a motion was made and approved to approve a health insurance opt-out for full time Village employees who are covered under another health care program. This opt-out, the details of which are on file in the Village Office, would grant a buy-out incentive for the employee who chooses to opt-out, and would also provide a financial benefit for the Village, whose annual premium on behalf of the employee, would be eliminated.

Request to Adjust Utility Invoice – we have received a written request from the property owner at 22 South Street, asking that the Board consider adjusting the utility invoice for the 3rd quarter, and lower the charge to somewhat near the normal range. Because the property owner has a history of not

usually being late in previous payments, and because the 3rd quarter water consumption was almost 30x higher than usual, the Village Board is inclined to adjust the invoice to some extent.

Spectrum Communications Cable Franchise Agreement - a motion was made and approved to again table the Spectrum Communications Cable Franchise Agreement until the Village Attorney has been able to negotiate successfully, the terms of the agreement, with Charter Communications.

Budget Modifications for November 2019 – a motion was made and approved to approve budget modifications requested by the Village Treasurer transferring revenues and appropriations in the General Fund.

Christmas and New Year's Holiday – a motion was made and approved to allow Village Employees to close the Village Offices at Noon on Tuesday, December 24, 2019 and at Noon on Tuesday, December 31, 2019 so that our employees receive time off from work. If the DPW Employees are called in to plow, they will be able to take off another half-day off from work, at the discretion of the DPW Superintendent. These will not be considered as holidays.

Village Meetings for January 2020 – we would make note the list of those meetings scheduled for the remainder of December and for January 2020, which is provided for those so interested – please note also that the Village Offices will be closed on Wednesday, December 25th, and Wednesday, January 1st for the Christmas and New Years Holiday. Because these holidays fall on a Wednesday, there will be a one-day DELAY in trash collection each of those weeks. The Village will also be closed on January 20, 2020 to honor the memory of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. There are also several handouts that are provided – on Water, Grease in the Waste Waters and other items of concern.

Extend MRB Engineering Contract – a motion was made and approved to approve an amendment to the MRB Engineering Contract for the Waste Water Treatment Plant Project, covering additional services for Construction Administration and Observation due to the general contractor's extension of the project schedule. The estimated fee of \$71,000 is based on an additional (6) months off construction and observation from December 2019 through May 2020 and the Village would only be charged on hours actually used.

Updates – Mayor and Board

F.O.G. (Fats, Oils, Grease) – in the wastewater is a topic that had been much discussed and will continue to be on the WPCP's agenda in the months ahead. We continue to provide a flyer that emphasizes the need to keep Fats, Oils and Grease out of the sanitary sewer system.

Flush-able Wipes – are not flushable and this was demonstrated early in December at the Orange Street Pump Station when the alarm sounded indicating that the pump station was fouled and inoperable. No wastewater was lost from the system and the station was returned to service within three hours thanks to our treatment plant operators' quick response at 3 a.m. What fouled the pump was feminine hygiene products and flush-able wipes, which DO NOT break down and end up causing a blockage. These items should never be introduced into the sanitary sewer system, since they are inorganic and fail to break down. They should be disposed in a resident's solid waste as ordinary garbage. Again, please do not flush so-called flush-able wipes.

No Parking – November 1st to April 1st – the public should be aware of the fact that as of November 1, 2019, there is no parking allowed on any street in the Village of Marcellus from 2 a.m. to

7 a.m. so that the Highway Department can plow snow. This no parking ban will remain in effect until April 1, 2020. If ticketed by Village Police, the fee will be \$35.00. We urge residents to use the Village parking lots for any overnight parking situations.

Snow Plowing – as in the past, we would like to alert independent snow plow operators that it is illegal to plow or shovel snow or ice during snow removal operations upon a village sidewalk or other public way. While most of the independent snow plow operators in the Village comply as much as possible with the law, there are some who need to be reminded that if a driveway is being plowed, that snow CAN NOT be plowed into the street. NOR can the snow be plowed out of a driveway, across the street and into the village right-of-way across from the plowed driveway. Some drivers have claimed that they have no place to put the snow. That, however, is not an excuse to put the snow into the street, nor across the street when plowing. The Village is not responsible for snow that accumulates on a resident's property and the Village is not responsible for removing snow that has been plowed onto the Village right-of-way. We ask that independent snowplow drivers take this into consideration when they are plowing residential properties in the village. No snow should be plowed onto a village street or sidewalk, and any that has been, accidentally, must be removed before finishing the job.

Composting – continues to move along and we would like to thank our operators as they prepare more compost for pickup in the spring.

Update on WWTP Upgrades – the \$7.7 million treatment plant upgrades mandated by NYSDEC to remove phosphorus from the plant's effluent continues to be underway with an expected substantial completion date of January 31, 2020. We have received complaints from several Town residents living near the plant, as to the noise that emanates from the blower pumps as well as the lights that shine constantly and are disturbing to the residents. The operators have installed light shields on several of the indicator lights, and the lights have been adjusted so that they reflect down and not out. DEC regulations require that the plant be constantly monitored and after hours dimming would require the spending of thousands of dollars. The Village is looking into the planting of arbor vitae trees with the expectation that these would help to shield much of the plant from the neighbors. The operators have also installed deadening wrap on the blower intakes, as well as built some walls around the blowers, which seem to have reduced the noise significantly. We might also note that the 40th meeting of the Construction Project Team took place on December 18, 2019 and the next is scheduled for January 8, 2020.

In anticipation of WWTP upgrades - the Village Board has increased the sewer rents significantly within the last three years. This has meant a minimum quarterly sewer rate, for Village sewer users, of \$100.00 (from \$75.00) and a minimum annual cost of \$400 (from \$300) and an average annual cost of about \$541.39 (from \$413.13). The annual cost for outside users is anticipated to be \$676.74 (from \$516.41). In order to prepare our Treatment Plant for operation well into the 21st century, these increases, while hefty, are unavoidable.

Planning Board – the Board does not plan to meet on December 18, 2019 since no items of concern have developed for the Board to review.

Christmas Tree Lighting – on behalf of the Board, I would like to extend special thanks to all who were instrumental in conducting a very successful Tree Lighting on December 6, 2019, in particular our Village Clerk, Charnley Abbott, and our DPW crew and our Police Department.

Police Warning – residents should be aware of the fact that some thieves have been active in the Village and Town, following FedEx and other vehicles delivering and leaving packages unattended at various locations and then stealing such packages – so called “porch pirates.” Chief Wicks urges residents to be vigilant about such activity and to notify the police if they have suspicions. The Chief reminds everyone, once again - Lock up your houses and cars. The average time it takes for a thief to get inside a vehicle and get out is about 20 seconds. In less than a minute, items may be gone and it isn't until you get into your vehicle that you notice items are gone. This has been going on in other nearby communities as well. Please call the police if you have suspicions or want to report a robbery. After 2 a.m., the Marcellus Police are not on duty and the only responder would be a single Sheriff's car, whose patrol extends from Onondaga Hill to Skaneateles.

Health Care Costs – continue to rise, but not as much as in previous years, and both the Village and its employees will be required to pay, on average, an increase of about 3% for health coverage and 0% for dental coverage, beginning in January 2020. Coverage is similar to last year, with little increase in premiums, but some increase in deductibles.

Pension Costs – for next year have been projected by the Village Treasurer to be within the allotted budget amounts. At this time, there appears to be no increase in pension costs for next year.

Christmas Trees – will be picked up by the Village Highway Department after the first of the year, probably beginning on January 2, 2020. Residents should place trees in the Village right of way between the sidewalk and the street.

Olde Home Days, 2020 (June 5, June 6 and 7) – the first meeting of the 2020 OHD Committee will be held on Thursday, January 2, 2020 at the Welcome Center in the Park, beginning at 6:30 p.m.

Onondaga County Community Development – is reaching out to the Village to discuss the Onondaga County Village Main Street Revitalization and Beautification Grant Program. This program is an initiative for elected officials to work with local business owners to develop a proposal that will positively impact Main Street and Village Center areas. This revitalization would involve aesthetic improvements, business creation/retention and beautification that will lead to healthier and more economically vibrant communities. Proposals will be evaluated and villages selected based on the overall impact of the project. A copy of the Application for Funding, which the County provided must be completed by any interested business owners in sufficient detail, particularly the project description and estimated costs, and returned to the Village by January 10, 2020. Once all of the completed applications have been submitted to the Village, we (the Village) will combine the proposed projects into one application and submit that application along with the proposed projects as addenda to the application. The reason for this is that we were told that such an application would have a better chance of approval than multiple single applications. Also bear in mind, that the limit for the five villages chosen is \$300,000 each, with a 25% match by the business owner. While some projects might be rather costly in scope, others might be small, but together the application's chance of success will look better. If some of the projects are large, and would utilize a significant amount of the total to be awarded, that business owner might be asked to provide more than the 25% match, which would increase our chances of having all of the projects funded. The Board continues to be excited about the potential of this grant opportunity and we encourage those interested in participating, to complete the application, with as much detail as possible and submit to the Village Office, 6 Slocombe Ave, Marcellus, NY 13108, or by email to marcellusmayor@twcny.rr.com by January 10, 2020.

Green Gateway Project – despite the winter weather, we are continuing to work the Green Gateway Project – a project that we hope will result in an environmentally positive gateway entrance to our Village – at the site of the former woolen mill on North Street. We have recently had the property resurveyed and the STEAM teachers and students at Marcellus Central are now working on the design for the parking lot at the site, as well as Nine Mile creek stabilization using the plans for the previous creek vanes in Marcellus Park and working on the arboretum aspect of the project, referencing a list of trees suitable for the site as well as their location. We are also investigating Public Fishing Rights for the creek, which essentially are a permanent deed restriction that simply allows people to access and fish the stream regardless of who the land may be sold to in the future.

Creekwalk – we might note that the trail is not open nor is it plowed during the winter season. For those interested, please check the Village Website for an update, some photos as well as a video of Fred’s Trail – <http://www.villageofmarcellus.com/creekwalk-news.html>.

Certificates of Excellence – have been sent to Emily Hamilton and Aurora Woodworth from the Board of Trustees of the Village of Marcellus for earning the Girl Scout Bronze Award, the highest honor a Girl Scout Junior can earn. Their dedicated service to the Flowers of Hope Project for Vera House is one that will impact the community for years to come.

Other – on behalf of the Village Board, I would extend a very Merry Christmas and wish all our Village residents the joy of family, the gift of friends and the best of everything for the New Year.